

## Press release: Illegal fishing in Staffordshire costs 5 anglers almost £4,000

Paul Beckett, of St James Green in Cotes Hill, Stafford, and Dominic Reece, of Essex Drive in Kidsgrove, were caught fishing on the River Dove at Eaton Dovedale on 18 March 2017. Beckett was fined £660 and Reece £370 by North Staffordshire Magistrates on 24 July 2017. Both men were also ordered to pay costs of £127. Beckett, 62, the case against whom was proved in his absence as he did not attend court, was also ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £66. Reece, 30, who pleaded guilty, was ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £37.

Stuart Mitchell, 52, of Hillsprings Court in Rugeley, and John Hope, 27, of Moreton Street in Stoke-on-Trent, were caught fishing on the River Trent at Rugeley on 8 March 2017. Both men were fined £660 and ordered to pay costs of £127 and a victim surcharge of £66. As neither attended court, the cases against them were proven in their absence.

Chris Mitchell, 33, of Crossley Avenue in Wigan, was caught fishing at Rudyard Lake, Leek, on 19 February 2017. After pleading guilty he was fined £620 and ordered to pay costs of £127 and a victim surcharge of £62.

Andrew Eardley of the Environment Agency said:

Most anglers enjoying the sport fish legally, but there continues to be small number of anglers who fail to buy a fishing licence. These few are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport.

An annual licence costs from just £30. It seems ridiculous that anglers risk significant fines and costs, a criminal conviction and the loss of their fishing equipment for such a small fee.

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

You need a valid Environment Agency fishing licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England. [Buying a rod licence](#) is easy. A licence lasts 365 days from the day you buy it.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it

directly to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.